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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BU](#)
SUBJECT: BULGARIA: NEW SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT SETS
AMBITIOUS AGENDA

REF: SOFIA 403

Classified By: CDA John Ordway for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In an introductory call with interim Charge, new Speaker of Parliament Tsetska Tsacheva presented an ambitious agenda focused on strengthening rule of law and improving the economic climate. In its first several months in office, Tsacheva's center-right parliamentary minority will take on revisions of the criminal code and criminal procedure code, with the goal of reducing loopholes exploited by organized crime and corruption defendants to stall legal proceedings. Working closely with the GERB-led government, Tsacheva hopes the legislative overhaul will allow the judicial system to chalk a few early victories, win back the European Commission's confidence, and loosen Brussels' purse strings. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Tsacheva told Charge August 13 that decreasing criminality would be this parliament's goal. She deflected concerns about leading a parliamentary minority (GERB controls 48 percent of seats), saying she was confident of the support of the three other center-right and right parties in Parliament, the Blue Coalition, Order Law and Justice and Ataka. In the five plenary sessions the Parliament has held since the end of July, GERB has also garnered a handful of votes from the opposition Bulgarian Socialist Party and ethnic-Turkish party MRF. Tsacheva noted with pride that her nomination as speaker had passed unanimously (apart from three abstentions.) This honeymoon phase would soon pass, but Tsacheva, a complete unknown on the national stage before her nomination by GERB as Parliamentary Speaker, assured us that she is steeled for battle when the time comes.

¶3. (C) Tsacheva requested U.S. assistance and closer coordination as Parliament moves forward with revisions to the criminal code and criminal procedures code. She lamented past Bulgarian naivete in transposing European directives word for word into Bulgarian law, when more nuance was required to account for Bulgarian reality. She requested help in finding the balance between protecting defendants rights while ensuring that justice is served. "We have the will to carry out these reforms, but we lack capacity and experts," she said.

¶4. (C) Bio Notes: Tsacheva, 51, is a career attorney and municipal counselor from Pleven. She joined GERB at its founding as a citizen's association in April 2006. In 2007 she ran as GERB's candidate for mayor in Pleven, coming in third place with only 12 percent of the vote. In 2009 national elections, she topped the GERB ticket in Pleven, winning a majoritarian seat. She is married, with one son. She speaks no English.
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